In the claims:

Please amend the claims and add new claims as set forth below:

1. (Currently Amended) An offline-online points system, comprising:

a main server <u>configured</u> for providing a user with an interface to submit a code, wherein ~~the user obtained~~ the code <u>is obtainable</u> offline and ~~the code~~ is associated with N points<u>, wherein each point, characterized as a purchase or attention incentive point, is redeemable and maintainable in an account for the user</u>; and

a code server <u>configured</u> for maintaining valid codes and verifying<u>, against the valid codes,</u> that the code ~~that~~ <u>submitted by</u> the user ~~submitted~~ is ~~a~~ valid ~~code~~<u>such that a balance in the account for the user is increased by a predetermined number of points if the code is valid</u>.

2. (Currently Amended) The <u>offline-online points</u> system of claim 1, further comprising:

a user database ~~that maintains an~~<u>configured for holding the</u> account ~~of~~<u>for</u> the user, wherein the ~~account~~ balance <u>of the account</u> is M points prior to the user's submission of the code.

3. (Currently Amended) The <u>offline-online points</u> system of claim 2, wherein the code server <u>is configured for updating</u> ~~updates~~ the account balance to M+N points after the user submits the code and if the code ~~server verifies that the code~~ is valid.

4. (Currently Amended) The <u>offline-online points</u> system of claim 2, wherein the main server ~~updates~~<u>is configured for updating</u> the account balance to M+N points after the user submits the code and if the code ~~server verifies that the code~~ is valid.

5. (Currently Amended) The <u>offline-online points</u> system of claim 2 wherein the code is C letters in length from an Alphabet of L letters.

6. (Currently Amended) The <u>offline-online points</u> system of claim 5, wherein C is 10.

7. (Currently Amended) The <u>offline-online points</u> system of claim ~~6~~<u>5</u>, wherein L is 29.

8.   (Currently Amended) The offline-online points system of claim 6<u>5</u>, wherein L is 36.

~~9-23~~   Cancelled.

24.   (New) The offline-online points system of claim 1, wherein the points are maintained in the account in an encrypted form to prevent unauthorized interference with the user account.

25.   (New) The offline-online points system of claim 1, further comprising:

means for generating the code; and

means for fixing the code onto a medium such that the code is obtainable from the medium offline.

26.   (New) The offline-online points system of claim 25, wherein the means for fixing the code onto the medium is a printer and the medium is a bottle cap from which the code is readable to the user.

27.   (New) The offline-online points system of claim 25, wherein the means for generating the code includes

means for providing a number portion,

means for deriving a validation portion from the number portion,

means for appending the validation portion to the number portion to form a string,

means for encrypting the string, and

means for deriving the code from the encrypted string by converting the encrypted string to base L string.

28.   (New) The offline-online points system of claim 27, wherein the code is a fixed-length string with C characters, and wherein the means for deriving the code further includes means for

prepending a character to the base L string any number of times that is needed to achieve the fixed-length of C characters.

29.   (New) The offline-online points system of claim 27, wherein L is the number of characters in the alphabet.

30.   (New) The offline-online points system of claim 27, wherein the string is 48-bits long and the number portion is 32-bits long.

31.   (New) The offline-online points system of claim 25, wherein the means for generating the code includes

means for providing a number portion, $S1_{INT}$, from a first string, S1

means for arranging a first secret key, K1, next to the number portion, $S1_{INT}$, from S1, to form a second string, S2,

means for applying a hash function to S2 to produce a third string, S3,

means for extracting a validation portion, $S1_{VAL}$, from S3 and arranging $S1_{VAL}$, next to $S1_{INT}$ in S1 ($S1 = S1_{VAL} + S1_{INT}$),

means for encrypting S1 using a second secret key, K2, to form a fourth string, S4, and

means for deriving the code by converting S4 to a base L fixed-length code string.

32.   (New) The offline-online points system of claim 31, wherein the first and second secret keys, K1 and K2, are 128-bits long and the encryption means includes DES3 encryption algorithm.

33.   (New) The offline-online points system of claim 31, wherein the hash function application means has MD5, a one-way hash algorithm.

34.   (New) The offline-online points system of claim 31, wherein S1 is 48-bits long and the number portion, $S1_{INT}$, is 32-bits long.

35. (New) The offline-online points system of claim 1, wherein for verifying the submitted code the code server includes,

means for converting the submitted code from a base L string into a base 2 string, $S4_{BASE2}$,

means for decrypting $S4_{BASE2}$ using a second secret key, K2, to form a decrypted first string, S1',

means for providing a number portion, $S1'_{INT}$, from S1'

means for arranging a first secret key, K1, next to the number portion, $S1'_{INT}$, from S1, to form a second string, S2',

means for applying a hash function to S2' to form a third string S3',

means for extracting a validation portion from S3' and a validation portion from S1', and

means for determining if the code is valid by comparing the validation portion from S3' with the validation portion from S1'.

36. (New) The offline-online points system of claim 35, wherein S3' and S1 are each 48-bits long and the secret keys, K1 and K2 are 128-bits long.

37. (New) The offline-online points system of claim 35, wherein the decryption means includes $DES3^{-1}$ decryption algorithm and the hash function application means includes MD5 hash algorithm.

38. (New) A system for incentive points earning and redemption, comprising:

an auction web server;

a store web server;

a web server from which the auction web server and the store web server are accessible to a user, the web server, in turn, being accessible to the user from either or both of the auction server and the store web server; and

a user database configured for maintaining user accounts, each user account corresponding to a user for containing points earned by that user,

wherein each point, characterized as a purchase or attention incentive point, is redeemable, and

wherein the number of points contained in the user account of a particular user relates to that user's interaction with the web server, web store server or auction server.

39.   (New) A system as in claim 38, further comprising:

a code server configured for maintaining valid codes against which a code submitted by the particular user is verifiable,

wherein the code is obtainable offline, and

wherein the particular user's interaction involves submission of the code in relation to which the user database is configured to receive into the user account a predetermined number of points earned by that user.

40.   (New) A system as in claim 38, wherein the particular user's interaction involves registration, an indicia of attention to an ad, or a purchase, in relation to which the user database is configured to receive into the user account a predetermined number of points earned by that user.

41.   (New) A system as in claim 38, wherein the particular user's interaction involves entering a winning bid in relation to which the user database is configured to dispatch a predetermined number of points taken out of that user's account.

42.   (new) A system as in claim 38, wherein the points are maintained in the user account in an encrypted form to prevent unauthorized interference with the user account.

43.   (New) An offline-online incentive points system, comprising:

one or more client computers;

a network; and

one or more servers accessible to the client computers via the network, at least one of the servers having

a web server ,

a messaging server,

a database server, wherein the web server interfaces with the network, the messaging server and the database server,

a plurality of databases serviced by the database server, including an account database and one or more of an auction database, an incentive points database, a coupon database, a bidder database, a seller database, a merchandise database, and a bid database, wherein the account database is configured for maintaining user accounts, each user account corresponding to a user for containing points earned by that user, wherein each point, characterized as a purchase or attention incentive point, is redeemable, and wherein the number of points contained in the account of a particular user relates to that user's interaction with the at least one server.

44.   (New) A system as in claim 43, wherein the at least one server further has

a code server including a code database;

wherein a code server is configured for maintaining valid codes against which a code submitted by the particular user is verifiable,

wherein the code is obtainable offline, and

wherein the particular user's interaction involves submission of the code in relation to which the account database is configured to receive into the user account a predetermined number of points earned by that user.

45.   (New) A system as in claim 43, wherein the at least one server further has

an authentication server configured for controlling user access by authenticating submitted user accounts information.

46.   (New) A system as in claim 46, wherein the particular user's interaction involves registration, an indicia of attention to an ad, or a purchase, in relation to which the account

database is configured to receive into the user account a predetermined number of points earned by that user.

47.   (New) A system as in claim 43, wherein the particular user's interaction involves entering a winning bid in relation to which the account database is configured to dispatch a predetermined number of points taken out of that user's account.

48.   (New) A system as in claim 43, wherein the network includes the Internet and the web server and messaging server are integrated in an Internet server.

49.   (New) A system as in claim 43, wherein the points are maintained in the account in an encrypted form to prevent unauthorized interference with the user account.

50.   (New) A method for offline-online handling of incentive points, comprising:
        obtaining a code offline;
        submitting the code online to a server that has valid codes, wherein the code is associated with N points maintained by the server in a user account, wherein each point, characterized as a purchase or attention incentive point, is redeemable; and
        verifying the submitted code against the valid codes to determine if it is valid, wherein if the submitted code is valid, a predetermined number of points are added to the user account.

51.   (New) A method as in claim 50, wherein the points are maintained in the user account in an encrypted form to prevent unauthorized interference with the user account.

52.   (New) A method as in claim 50, wherein the points in the user account are redeemed for a gift or through an auction.

53.   (New) A method as in claim 52, wherein the auction is one of a standard auction, a Dutch auction, a progressive auction, a buy-or-bid auction, and a declining bid auction.

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54.   (New) A method as in claim 52, wherein the auction involves one or more of an automated closing, automated bidding, automated selling, and auction alert.

55.   (New) A method as in claim 50, wherein points are added to the user account by authorizing credit points.

56.   (New) A method as in claim 50, wherein points are added to or redeemed from the user account in response to a point-actionable event.

57.   (New) A method as in claim 56, wherein the point-actionable event for which points are added is a purchase, an indicia of attention to an item on a web site, or registration, and wherein the point-actionable event for which points are redeemed is a winning auction bid.

58.   (New) A method as in claim 50 further comprising:
        generating the code; and
        fixing the code onto a medium such that the code is obtainable from the medium offline.

59.   (New) A method as in claim 58, wherein the code is fixed onto the medium by printing the code on a bottle cap from which the code is readable to the user.

60.   (New) A method as in claim 58, wherein the code is generated by
                providing a number portion,
                deriving a validation portion from the number portion,
                appending the validation portion to the number portion to form a string;
                encrypting the string, and
                deriving the code from the encrypted string by converting the encrypted string to
base L string.

61. (New) A method as in claim 60, wherein the code is a fixed-length string with C characters, and wherein a character is prepended to the base L string any number of times that is needed to achieve the fixed-length of C characters.

62. (New) A method as in claim 60, wherein L is the number of characters in the alphabet.

63. (New) A method as in claim 60, wherein the string is 48-bits long and the number portion is 32-bits long.

64. (New) A method as in claim 58, wherein generating the code involves

    providing a number portion, $S1_{INT}$, from a first string, S1

    arranging a first secret key, K1, next to the number portion, $S1_{INT}$, from S1, to form a second string, S2,

    applying a hash function to S2 to produce a third string, S3,

    extracting a validation portion, $S1_{VAL}$, from S3 and arranging $S1_{VAL}$, next to $S1_{INT}$ in S1 ($S1=S1_{VAL}+S1_{INT}$),

    encrypting S1 using a second secret key, K2, to form a fourth string, S4, and

    deriving the code by converting S4 to a base L fixed-length code string.

65. (New) A method as in claim 64, wherein the first and second secret keys, K1 and K2, are 128-bits long and the encryption involves DES3 encryption algorithm.

66. (New) A method as in claim 64, wherein the hash function is MD5, a one-way hash algorithm.

67. (New) A method as in claim 64, wherein S1 is 48-bits long and the number portion, $S1_{INT}$, is 32-bits long.

68. (New) A method as in claim 50 wherein the step of verifying the submitted code includes,

    converting the submitted code from a base L string into a base 2 string, $S4_{BASE2}$,

decrypting S4$_{BASE2}$ using a second secret key, K2, to form a decrypted first string, S1',

providing a number portion from S1'

arranging a first secret key, K1, next to the number portion from S1' to form a second string, S2',

applying a hash function to S2' to form a third string S3',

extracting a validation portion from S3' and a validation portion from S1', and

determining if the code is valid by comparing the validation portion from S3' with the validation portion from S1'.

69.   (New) A method as in claim 68, wherein S3' and S1 are each 48-bits long and the secret keys, K1 and K2 are 128-bits long.

70.   (New) A method as in claim 68, wherein the decryption involves DES3^{-1} decryption algorithm and the has function involves MD5 hash algorithm.